

Sosman JM, MacGowan RJ, Flanigan TP, Vardaman J, Eldridge G, Fitzgerald C, Margolis A, Kacanek D, Binson D, Cunliffe T, and the Project START Study Group. STD and hepatitis infections, and risk perceptions among 18-29 year old men recently released from prison. National HIV Prevention Conference; August 2001; Atlanta, Georgia. Abstract 409.

Background: Men entering prisons have significantly higher rates of STDs, Hepatitis B, and HIV than the general population. Yet little is known about the prevalence of these infections among men who are recently released from prison.

Methods: Male inmates (n=110) soon to be released from prison were enrolled into a formative study from four locales across the United States to assist in the development of a behavioral intervention to reduce HIV/STD and hepatitis risk behaviors. Participants were interviewed while incarcerated and after their release. Participants who were not incarcerated at the six-month follow-up were offered free testing for gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomonas, syphilis, and hepatitis B and C. Those tested were provided with their results, information, and referral. Free Hepatitis B vaccination was offered where indicated.

Results: From the initial interview of 109 participants, 37% reported having had at least one of the following infections before this incarceration: gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomonas, syphilis, HBV, and HCV. Prior to their release from prison, 25% thought they had $\geq 50\%$ chance of acquiring a STD six months after their release from prison, and 13% reported $\geq 50\%$ chance of becoming infected with HIV during the same period. Seventy-five men were eligible to be tested for STDs and hepatitis. Of the 33 men tested, 21% (7/33) of the men had an infection (chlamydia, trichomonas, HCV) that could potentially be passed to a sex or drug partner. Three of 32 (9%) tested positive for chlamydia, three of 32 (9%) tested positive for trichomonas, and 2 of 28 (7%) had prior syphilis infections identified. Of 28 tested for hepatitis B, 5 (18%) were immune to HBV, and four (14%) had an uncertain status and required further follow-up, and 19 (64%) were not immune. Two of 28 men (7%) tested positive for hepatitis C infection. None of the 19 men who were offered HBV vaccination 6 months after their release from prison accepted the offer of free vaccine.

Conclusions: The high prevalence of communicable infections in young men, who have been incarcerated, suggests the need for HIV/STD and hepatitis prevention, testing and vaccination programs for this population while they are in prison and after their release.